

# SPOLIA FROM CONSTANTINE TO CHARLEMAGNE: AESTHETICS VERSUS IDEOLOGY

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The concept of "spolia" is an entirely modern one, based on a word from the realm of art historical terminology in architecture. It is derived from the Latin "spolium," which means "removed hide of an animal" and, in a more general sense, "a soldier's booty" or "spoils of war." The modern concept of "spolia" refers to the reused parts of architectural constructions that are taken from a demolished building—a building, therefore, to remain with the hunter's terminology, stripped of its hide.

As early as the era of Constantine, columns, capitals, and architraves of old buildings were reused in new structures. To clarify this issue I would like to explain the second part of my title. When someone removes the hide of a building or tears out its innards, he resembles a cannibal. A cannibal does not devour his enemies mainly because he wants to nourish himself but because he hopes that in so doing he will acquire his destroyed enemy's strength. Therefore, he eats human flesh not so much because he is hungry or because he prefers human flesh to a sirloin steak but rather for ideological reasons. Consequently, ideology plays a far greater role with cannibals than aesthetics, and thus we have reached our theme.

Another comparison from the cannibalistic domain may be allowed: just as the cannibal never explained, in writing, his occasional preference for human flesh over animal meat, thus none of the architects of Early Christian and medieval times explained why they reused construction materials from destroyed buildings. In other words, there are no texts clarifying the ideology of despoliation. To be quite honest, therefore, I should add a subtitle to my paper: ideology without texts.

Any art historian and archeologist following the philological-historical method will refrain from speaking of ideology without having any texts at his disposal. On the other hand, iconologists,

semioticians, experts in hermeneutics, and historians of the "nouvelle histoire," the so-called history of mentality, display a more tolerant attitude in managing to read ideologies into the monuments without a single written line available for reference. Relying entirely on so-called visual symbols, they propose hypothetical, but often fertile, interpretations. The question of despoliation has been treated by two noted representatives of these two methods, F. W. Deichmann and R. Krautheimer.

In his monograph on spolia published in 1975 Deichmann states two main reasons for their use: the change in aesthetic attitudes and the increasing economic weakness of late Antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Krautheimer, on the other hand, would like to interpret the spolia of the Roman churches, especially those dating from the first half of the fifth century, as proof of a "renaissance of classical antiquity."<sup>2</sup> The two standpoints could hardly be more contradictory. Subsequently, I would like to introduce two new points: first, the problem of the origins of despoliation in the era of Constantine and, second, the transport of spolia over long distances as opposed to the local reuse of construction materials.

## I. THE ORIGINS OF SPOLIA IN THE ERA OF CONSTANTINE

Spolia were first used extensively in the era of Constantine. The most important early examples are the Arch of Constantine, the Lateran Church,

<sup>1</sup>F. W. Deichmann, *Die Spolien in der spätantiken Architektur*, SB Münch. Philos.-hist.Kl. (1975), Heft 6, 95; idem, "Säule und Ordnung in der frühchristlichen Architektur," *RM* 55 (1940), 114–30.

<sup>2</sup>R. Krautheimer, "The Architecture of Sixtus III: A Fifth-Century Renaissance?" *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art* (New York, 1969), 181–96; idem, "Success and Failure in Late Antique Church Planning," in *The Age of Spirituality: A Symposium* (New York, 1980), 121–39; idem, *Three Christian Capitals. Topography and Politics* (Berkeley, 1983), 105.

and St. Peter's in Rome. All three buildings are closely connected with Constantine, and we have to assume that the extensive use of spolia in these three buildings may have occurred on his or his court architect's strict orders.

The Lateran Basilica, begun in 313 by Constantine, intended, as Krautheimer suggested, as an ex-voto to Christ who had granted Constantine victory,<sup>3</sup> was a building with five aisles. The double aisles on either side of the nave were separated by arcades resting on green-speckled verde antico columns. The red columns in the nave differed in material and size, and the capitals in type and height. Specific details concerning the form and the historical position of the spolia in the Lateran Church cannot, unfortunately, be understood from the documents. Gagliardi's fresco, dating from 1651 and showing the interior of the Lateran, is not fully reliable since he could, at best, have seen only a reproduction of the original interior.<sup>4</sup> The variations in color and form of the capitals may not be freely invented, and the varying height of the columns in the fresco merit serious consideration. The Lateran Basilica is, then, not only the first church but also the first sacred structure built by an emperor where spolia were used extensively as part of the construction.

The same concept can be seen in the Arch of Constantine, consecrated in 315. It was erected by the Senate and the people of Rome in Constantine's honor to commemorate his victory over Maxentius at the Milvian bridge. Almost all of the construction parts of the arch were taken from older buildings. H. P. L'Orange, A. v. Gerkan,<sup>5</sup> and H. Kähler<sup>6</sup> were able to trace the dates and origins of the individual constituent parts. The historical representations, for example, the reliefs showing Constantine's entry into Italy and his triumph over Maxentius at the Milvian bridge, are, however, new and ad hoc works; they are, in fact, homogeneous achievements of one workshop. A noted artist transformed the original portraits of the spolia reliefs into those of Constantine and Licinius. Those reliefs taken over from older triumphal monu-

ments are of Trajanic, Hadrianic, and Aurelian origin.

After scrupulous analysis of the entire program, L'Orange reached the following conclusion: "The range of ideas on the arch is homogeneous; ideally the monument is of a single cast."<sup>7</sup> For Constantine, the emperors Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius, whose triumphal monuments he had pillaged, personified the lost *saecula aurea*. This political propaganda by Constantine should be considered all the more seriously, as on the relief of the *Oratio* are represented the two sitting statues of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius.

L'Orange's positive, ideological interpretation of the program is not, actually, based on the inscriptions on the arch itself but rather on an identification of the statues in the *Oratio* with Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius. This interpretation receives further support from the spolia reliefs, which were not selected without some deliberation, since the portraits would not have otherwise been readapted to represent Constantine and Licinius. This, in itself, was a novum on a triumphal arch. Jacob Burckhardt<sup>8</sup> maintained that the adjustment of older reliefs to fit the Arch of Constantine occurred rapidly. Also, Ferdinand Lot<sup>9</sup> said: "The buildings of Constantine's reign bear the same hasty character of improvisation as the social reforms of that Emperor." But the remodeled portraits display high quality and care.<sup>10</sup> I do not at all see how it could have been possible to save money by using spolia. Someone capable of erecting such numerous and great buildings as Constantine had vast funds available to him. There cannot have been a lack of artists, either, since the actual triumph of Constantine was carved by contemporary sculptors. Their work was believed to be good enough to fit this purpose. Interestingly the very same sculptors have carved numerous Christian sarcophagi, too. Besides, the arch is of considerable size and virtually flooded with reliefs and ornaments. One cannot avoid thinking that this triumphal arch was commissioned by someone who clearly intended to use spolia. The arch, therefore, is not precipitous patchwork but a prominent monument of imperial propaganda by

<sup>3</sup> Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, 12; R. Krautheimer et al., *Corpus basilicarum christianarum Romae*, V (Vatican City, 1977), 89.

<sup>4</sup> Krautheimer et al., *Corpus*, V.64–65, 79–80; col. pl.: A. Grabar, *Die Kunst des frühen Christentums* (Munich, 1967), fig. 179.

<sup>5</sup> H. P. L'Orange and A. v. Gerkan, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens* (Berlin, 1939), 33, 161; E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* (London, 1977), 7–14.

<sup>6</sup> H. Kähler, *Römische Gebälke*, II.1. *Die Gebälke des Konstantinsbogens* (Heidelberg, 1953).

<sup>7</sup> L'Orange and v. Gerkan, op. cit., 191.

<sup>8</sup> J. Burckhardt, *Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen*, ed. B. Wyss (Bern, 1950), 315, 395.

<sup>9</sup> F. Lot, *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1965), 137.

<sup>10</sup> L'Orange and v. Gerkan, op. cit., 161, 165, 168, pls. 41 a–b, 43–44.

definition. In my opinion, these spolia may not be considered as a sign of economic necessity, lack of artistic imagination, or superficial haste. If Constantine had not disposed of large funds, he would not have built the Lateran at the same time as he built the arch and he would probably have chosen more modest dimensions for the Lateran itself. Furthermore, it is unlikely that he would have transformed the Maxentius basilica (one of the largest buildings of the entire Roman period), and it is unlikely that he would have initiated the construction of the Thermae on the Quirinal in 315. The cost of all these buildings must have been quite considerable. Although Constantine was only in Rome three times for any length of time (312/13, 315, 326), he had the city virtually flooded with new constructions. His passion for building competed with that of Diocletian. But the monumental structures of Diocletian are not, with the exception of the Arcus Novus, spolia buildings. It was Constantine who introduced spolia, simultaneously in a state building and in a religious building: the triumphal arch and the Lateran Basilica. In my opinion, this is evidence of a deliberate building program.

What kind of statement was intended? The arch, like all triumphal arches, was a monument of political propaganda. The reused reliefs of former times evoked early Roman tradition. With this monument, as a whole, Constantine placed himself in the midst of a venerable line of Roman emperors. As a nonaristocratic ruler of Illyrian origin (born in Naissus; his mother, Helena, had earlier owned an inn), he was very anxious to put himself in the true light. Reused triumphal reliefs, remodeled to fit his person, expressed his desire for sovereign legitimacy.

What about the numerous capitals and friezes from older buildings, however? A reused architrave is hardly an apt expression of "sovereign legitimacy"! The ornaments used on the Arch of Constantine cannot be interpreted separately but only within the total concept. Ornamental building elements, combined with historical reliefs, were applied to the Arch of Constantine in such a way as to form a whole. The ornamental elements of the structure may not, therefore, be interpreted ideologically but aesthetically. They correspond to a new, hitherto unknown taste, possibly inaugurated with the Arch of Constantine.

In the first Christian basilica built by the emperor all of the columns and capitals are spolia. Under no circumstances could Constantine have

introduced older historical reliefs here. The spolia in the Lateran certainly do not serve the purpose of demonstrating sovereign legitimacy. They are to be considered seriously as a new artistic medium which by the character of tradition and time-honored norms could be transmitted to a building: a new aesthetics, operating not with the concept of the brand-new but rather with the concept of reuse. The basilica, serving Christian purposes, was a novelty, while the decorative elements were to be traditional or archaic. In reusing these ornamental parts it was possible to accentuate better and in a new way (e.g., red columns for the nave, green columns for the aisles) than by using contemporary construction parts which, at that time, were of highly varying quality. Most of all, however, one was able to strive for *varietas*: a central concept of late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Constantine's new aesthetics did not call for unity but rather for *varietas*. Permission was now granted to mix the long-established architectural orders. That was entirely new. The old canons of form had served their time in Rome and in Italy. Corinthian capitals alternating with Ionic capitals are seen for the first time in the Lateran Church.<sup>11</sup> *Varietas* is displayed in Constantinian floor mosaics as well. In the aula at Aquileia are put together ten different kinds of ornaments and themes facing different directions. Kähler<sup>12</sup> has tried to identify the panel with the five portraits with Fausta and her four sons. Fausta, however, did not have four but only three sons. Besides, there is not the slightest resemblance between this hypothetical rendering and the authentic portraits of Constantine. Furthermore, the heads in medallions are combined with medallions enclosing a fish. This indicates clearly that different kinds of motives were intended to be mixed.

With this new aesthetic of spolia in the Arch of Constantine and in the Lateran Church, I do not intend to ignore an economic explanation altogether. But I should like to consider it as being only of marginal importance. The emperor was affluent enough to build generously. Material necessity alone cannot account for the use of spolia on Constantinian buildings. Later on, in the later fourth and in the fifth and sixth centuries, however, the use of spolia may, more and more, reflect economic distress.

<sup>11</sup> Grabar, op. cit., fig. 179; Krautheimer et al., *Corpus*, V.65, fig. 77.

<sup>12</sup> H. Kähler, *Die Stiftermosaiken in der konstantinischen Südkirche von Aquileia* (Cologne, 1962).

To summarize: the use of spolia in the large Christian basilicas has to be viewed in connection with Constantine the Great's building program, including public and sacred Christian buildings. Spolia were not selected for Christian basilicas only but were used on Constantinian buildings in general, mainly for aesthetic reasons, to obtain *varietas* within the context of traditional forms of construction but disconnected from their canonical use. Constantine's court architects deliberately gave up the time-honored form canon and mixed the architectural orders. In this we may see decadence and/or new creations but by no means classicism. Constantine, unlike his predecessors, did not create a style of his own in architectural sculpture but refrained from new creations by substituting spolia for them. Urban Roman buildings under Constantine displayed an attitude toward despoliation that differs considerably from other uses of spolia at that time.

In using spolia the monumental buildings of Constantine initiated a long-lasting tradition reflected mainly in the papal basilicas of Rome. It is remarkable that spolia were first used extensively on monumental imperial and luxury buildings, not on insignificant churches in the provinces. With these monumental buildings, dating from the era of Constantine, the use of spolia had become legitimate; more than a hundred years later, in 458, it became legalized by law.<sup>13</sup>

There is some ideology inherent in any kind of aesthetics. In the use of spolia on Constantine's monumental buildings, we can observe the materialization of the innovating principle of *varietas* as well as a traditionalistic, conservative gesture. Preservation and conservation are the obvious themes of Constantine's buildings. The spolia in them are evidence of a conservative, retrospective mentality. For these reasons they are also the witnesses to protective measures, whereby the most valuable construction materials (such as columns, capitals, and architraves) from ruined and dilapidated buildings were saved from demolition and reused in new structures. Such a transference of building materials was by no means inexpensive, let alone practical, since the different heights of the columns (e.g., in the Lateran) had to be adjusted and leveled. In other words, it is far more difficult and inconvenient to work with spolia than with newly made, homogeneous building materials. In view of these reflections, Constantine's use of spolia can no

longer be considered as economical ploy but rather as an impressive protective and aesthetic measure.

As we have seen, the use of spolia did not become customary by degree but was instituted on a large scale by Constantine's imperial art policy. No one but the emperor had juridical authority to pull down dilapidated public buildings and to have their construction materials removed. For this reason despoliation was practiced repeatedly after Constantine, although not exclusively by emperors and kings. It is obvious that old structures in the provinces were more and more frequently pulled down or plundered by private individuals, the *comes* or the bishops. However, the construction materials for S. Sabina in the Aventine can have been procured only by imperial consent. A pagan temple of the second century provided the twenty-four columns and capitals, presumably the temple of Juno Regina, destroyed by the Goths in 410.<sup>14</sup>

The bishops in the provinces assumed very early on the right to pillage antique buildings in order to provide construction materials for churches. Gradually the bishops became heirs to the opera publica. They took charge of the restoration of public buildings and city walls. A note in the *Liber Pontificalis* datable to the time of Pope Sixtus III says: "hic constituit columnas in baptisterium basilicae Constantinianae, quas a tempore Constantini Augusti fuerant congregatas, ex metallo purpureo numero VIII, quas erexit cum epistolis suis et versibus exornavit."<sup>15</sup> Constantine had apparently put in storage eight porphyry columns and entablatures for which he had no use at the time, with the intention of using them for the construction of the Lateran baptistry. But it was Sixtus III who eventually made use of these valuable spolia. This is a model case: the bishop becomes the heir of the emperor.

As early as the fifth century despoliation had become a universal custom. Y. Janvier has examined the legislative side of the problem in his thesis; the imperial construction laws dating from 320 onward are all too well known.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, sources pertaining to the use of spolia in Constantinian buildings are very rare. I just quoted the case of the Lateran baptistry.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 16–17; A. Merlin, *L'Aventin dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 1906), 430.

<sup>15</sup> G. B. Giovenale, *Il battistero Lateranense* (Rome, 1929), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Y. Janvier, *La législation du Bas-Empire romain sur les édifices publics*, Diss. (Aix-en-Provence, 1969).

<sup>13</sup> Deichmann, *Die Spolien*, 100.

From Eusebius we know only that Constantine had the foundations of the temple of Aphrodite at Jerusalem dug up and removed before he built the church of the Holy Sepulcher on the site.<sup>17</sup> Constantine thought the pagan construction materials in Jerusalem to be impure and abstained from using them again.

## II. THEODORIC AND THE "NOVA GLORIA VETUSTATIS"

There are no indications in the texts regarding Constantine's conservative mentality, nor is such a mentality known before Theodoric. The main sources for Theodoric are Cassiodorus' *Variae*. So far art history has not paid much attention to them.<sup>18</sup> Theodoric was not only one of the great builders of Ravenna but of all Italy. He, unlike other rulers before him, applied all of his efforts to the task of conserving antique art and architecture. A few passages from the letters collected by Cassiodorus in the *Variae* suffice to demonstrate the point: "The old solidity must be renewed" ("antiqua soliditas innovetur"; II.39). "We wish to build new edifices, but even more to preserve the old ones" ("nova construere, sed amplius vetusta servare"; III.9). "We are striving to bring back all things to their former state" ("ad statum studeamus pristinum cuncta revocare"; III.31). "In our times Antiquity appears to be decently renewed" ("nostris temporibus videatur antiquitas decentius innovata"; IV.51).

In a letter of 507–509 addressed to Agapitus, prefect of the city of Rome (I.6), Theodoric requests "marmorarios peritissimos" to be sent from Rome to Ravenna for the restoration of the "basilica Herculis." He ordered that the faded marble surfaces be embellished with paintings ("discolorea crusta marmorum gratissima picturarum varietate texantur"). In the same letter we find the noteworthy aesthetic statement: "Let us not lag behind the ancients' desire for adornment" ("absit enim ut ornatui cedamus veterum"). Time and again Theodoric compares himself to the Roman emperors, whose building fervor he aimed to imitate. For this reason the *Anonymus Valesianus* says about him: "erat enim amator fabricarum et restaurator civitatum."

In one of Theodoric's letters (III.9) spolia are

expressly mentioned as being transferred from Rome to Ravenna: "We wish to build new edifices without despoiling the old. But we are informed that in your municipality (of *Aestunae*) there are blocks of masonry and columns formerly belonging to some building now lying absolutely useless and dishonored. If it be so, by all means send these slabs of marble and columns to Ravenna, that they may be made beautiful again and take their place in a building there." A similar letter (III.10) concerns the order for the transport of marbles from the Pincian Hill (in Rome) to the palace of Ravenna, by *catabulenses*, that is, freighters or contractors who effected the transport of heavy goods by means of draught horses and mules. Theodoric's letter, handed down by Cassiodorus in the *Variae*, III.9–10, is our chief witness to Theodoric's conservative mentality. However, I do not believe that Theodoric attempted a new aesthetic position. Constantine might have expressed the same thoughts. In the letter (*Variae*, III.10) sent by Theodoric to Patricius Festus in Rome, it is requested that "marmora, quae de domo Pinciana constat" (marble slabs from a house situated in the Pincio and lying about unused) be transported to Ravenna. This passage deserves our special attention because in it are mentioned slabs of marble that are to be transported from Rome to Ravenna, that is, over a great distance.

What was the true reason for this long-distance transport of spolia? Could it be that Theodoric was able to find satisfactory construction materials only in Rome, or did he wish, as it were, to import it from Rome in order to perpetuate Roman antiquity in Ravenna? Or could he have wished to legitimize himself politically with Roman building materials?

Theodoric did not have to depend on Rome for his political legitimation since he was king and ruled over Italy with the consent of the Byzantine emperor at Constantinople. On the other hand, the cost of transporting spolia in this manner must have been considerable, and we have to ask ourselves why Theodoric did not turn to Milan or some other northern Italian city for his building material.

Ideology as well as aesthetics cannot be excluded from Theodoric's motivations. It was especially his conservative aesthetics or monument-protecting aesthetics that caused him to import spolia from Rome. Theodoric's aesthetic observations deserve serious consideration in this context. In one of his letters he says: "nothing but the newness of the

<sup>17</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, III.30.

<sup>18</sup> But see, recently, J. B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300–850* (Oxford, 1984), 158–66, 203–18.

buildings must distinguish them from the constructions of the ancients.”<sup>19</sup> Further on he says: “Let us renew the works of the ancients faultlessly and unmask the new glory of their venerable antiquity.”<sup>20</sup> This conservative mentality of Theodoric did not refer to the material alone but to the historical tradition of Rome represented by spolia and emphasized by the concept of “nova gloria vetustatis.”

In plain terms this means reverence for Roman history. In any event, spolia can be considered neither a cheap nor a particularly convenient material to work with. Their transport was expensive, and they were most troublesome for the architect.

To our great surprise spolia are a rarity in the surviving buildings of Theodoric at Ravenna.<sup>21</sup> The mausoleum is built, *ex novo*, of Istrian limestone. Only Theodoric's sarcophagus is a reused piece—an antique porphyry sarcophagus. In Theodoric's palace church, S. Apollinare Nuovo, all of the building materials (except for the imposts of the pilasters in the arcades of the nave at the west and east ends) were new. All of the columns and capitals were newly made in Constantinople. Theodoric did not use spolia in his churches. He used them in his palace (III.10). This was no coincidence, since he referred to his palace as a symbol of political representation: “These are the joyful witnesses of our government, the sparkling embodiment of our reign, the herald's call of sovereign power. We show these things with admiration to the ambassadors who can easily identify the sovereign with his residence.”<sup>22</sup> This sentence entitles us to interpret Theodoric's imports of spolia as an expression of his power politics: the spolia recall the historical tradition of Rome on the site of Theodoric's sovereignty.

A few concluding observations concerning the use of spolia by Charlemagne may be added. It is well known that Charlemagne imported spolia from Rome and Ravenna for the decoration of his palace chapel at Aachen. As early as 787 he ex-

changed letters with Pope Hadrian regarding this long-distance import of spolia, shortly after his third visit to Rome. The pope allowed the king to remove marble spolia from the palace in Ravenna and to transport them to Aachen. It is evident from this correspondence that Charlemagne, though he was king, had no authority to import spolia.<sup>23</sup> It is even more curious that Charlemagne wanted to have spolia from Theodoric's palace at Ravenna, whose building material itself, as we have seen, came from Rome.

I feel bold enough to venture a hypothesis to the effect that Charlemagne did not recognize, on his own, the Roman origin of the spolia in Theodoric's palace, but possibly knew of their Roman origin from his reading of Cassiodorus' *Variae*, that is, he probably wanted to imitate Theodoric.<sup>24</sup> This is further supported by the fact that in 801 Charlemagne had a bronze equestrian statue of Theodoric transported from Ravenna to Aachen. It was placed between the audience hall and the palace chapel.<sup>25</sup> In addition, he copied S. Vitale in his palace chapel at Aachen, possibly because he recognized Theodoric, and not Justinian, in the famous imperial mosaics of S. Vitale.<sup>26</sup>

These reversions to Early Christian prototypes have to be viewed together with the *Roma secunda* ideology and the *renovatio* idea in general in Charlemagne's surroundings. In 829 Walahfrid Strabo wrote a highly critical poem about Theodoric's statue at Aachen.<sup>27</sup> He even accused Charlemagne of destroying antique buildings and of carrying off antique building materials to Aachen: “Whatever the emperor wants, whatever the evil one destroys—everything is abducted to the Frankish stronghold” (“velit Caesar magnus, migrabit ad arces Francorum quodcumque miser conflaverit orbis”).

Hartmut Hoffmann had the excellent idea of interpreting the importation of Theodoric's statue as

<sup>19</sup> “. . . ut ab opere veterum sola distet novitas fabricarum”; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, VII.5.

<sup>20</sup> “. . . ut et facta veterum exclusis defectibus innovemus et nova vetustatis gloria vestiamus”; *ibid.*, VII.15.

<sup>21</sup> Ward-Perkins, *op. cit.*, 214–15.

<sup>22</sup> “Haec nostra sunt oblectamenta potentiae, imperii decora facies, testimonium praeconiale regnorum: haec legatis sub admiratione monstrantur et prima fronte talis dominus esse creditur, quale eius habitaculum comprobatur”; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, VII.5.

<sup>23</sup> Ward-Perkins, *op. cit.*, 205; G. Bandmann, “Die Vorbilder der Aachener Pfalzkapelle,” *Karl der Grosse. 3: Karolingische Kunst* (Düsseldorf, 1965), 424 note 5.

<sup>24</sup> The *Variae* of Cassiodorus are mentioned in the 9th-century library catalogue of Lorsch abbey: M. Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, I (Munich, 1911; 1959<sup>2</sup>), 41.

<sup>25</sup> F. Thürlemann, “Die Bedeutung der Aachener Theoderich-Statue für Karl d. Gr. (801) und bei Walahfrid Strabo,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 59 (1977), 25–65.

<sup>26</sup> F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, I (Wiesbaden, 1969), 241–43; *idem*, *Kommentar. 2. Teil* (Wiesbaden, 1976), 184–86.

<sup>27</sup> Thürlemann, *op. cit.*

a *translatio artium* in analogy to the *translatio imperii*.<sup>28</sup> Thus the imitation of S. Vitale as well as the importation of spolia from Theodoric's palace has to be understood as a *translatio artium* of great importance. The design of this *translatio* was to bring to mind and to exhibit publicly the monumental guarantors of Early Christian Roman-imperial tradition.

Charlemagne's abduction of building material from Theodoric's palace is a form of imperial legitimation and not simply an importation of material. It is not by mere accident that spolia from Rome and Ravenna were used in Charlemagne's palace at Ingelheim (Poeta Saxo). The idea of a long-distance importation of spolia was so new at

the time that it was soon stylized into a literary topos. However, for Charlemagne, the spolia from Rome and Ravenna were something prominent.

With this gesture of the importation as such as well as with the material from Italy, Charlemagne intended to place himself in the midst of the Roman imperial succession. In Aachen, therefore, the spolia were to guarantee the Christian Roman imperial tradition. In contrast to Charlemagne, Constantine and Theodoric had used spolia for the purpose of protecting monuments. Constantine wanted to preserve antiquities, and in doing so he created a new aesthetic which lent spolia a conservative ideological content. For this new aesthetic Theodoric had coined a new formula, "*nova gloria vetustatis*."

<sup>28</sup> H. Hoffmann, "Die Aachener Theoderichstatue," *Das erste Jahrtausend. Kultur und Kunst im werdenden Abendland an Rhein und Ruhr*, I (Düsseldorf, 1964), 318 ff, esp. 331.

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